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Skating to rock and roll

Skaters were excited to show off their moves at the Jump, Spin, and Glide Into Spring Gala at the S.G. Nesbitt Arena on Sunday. /TIM YANO Special to the *Times*

Minden considers new fire department dispatch service

by **JAMES MATTHEWS**
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Minden Hills may single-source emergency fire dispatching from a Smith Falls service.

Township council decided Feb. 29 to consider an agreement with the Smith Falls Fire Dispatch Centre. That's the service used by Highlands East and Algonquin Highlands for fire department dispatch.

The cost of Smith Falls Dispatch Center is $26,141.25 and an additional first-year start-up cost of $12,000 for a total of $38,141.25 plus HST. The 2024 budget has $13,000, based on past contracts. That means a difference of $25,200.

Robert Thibert, the acting fire chief in Minden Hills, said the current dispatch service pages firefighters when they receive an emergency call for assistance. If other help is required from neighbouring fire departments, police, or Hydro crews, Thibert said those calls for made by the local fire department.

"We have to pick up our cellphone and phone those folks to get those services out to us," he said. "It's very difficult sometimes to manage a fire scene and actually pick up a phone and call, to find the time to orchestrate an emergency scene and notify our dispatch."

He said the current service is deemed to be unreliable. Not having a live dispatch services puts firefighters, the community, and the municipality at risk.

The Smith Falls company will be an improvement, he said, and it helps that it's the same one used by neighbouring communities.

"It's going to have many benefits," he said.

The departments can share information and call for assistance faster.

Logs and reports from the Smith Falls Fire Dispatch Centre can be used for the department's compliance reporting. The centre will provide recordings and mandatory documentation for legal and liability coverage for the department and township.

Minden Fire will have access to the same mapping as the neighbouring departments, which will enhance adherence to automatic aid agreements.

Personnel can communicate directly with the Dispatch Service via radio and stay in constant communication if necessary. Communication with the current dispatch provider occurs via cell phone.

see SMITH page 2

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Smith Falls offers flexibility, consistency

from page 1

Colleague fire departments will be aware of incidents in Minden Hills sooner and can respond quicker if additional aid is needed.

Smith Falls Fire Dispatch Center is a fire-only dispatch service. They do not have to focus on answering redundant 911 calls, nor do they dispatch police or ambulance priorities.

The costing formulas primarily used by fire dispatch services are a per capita billing model. However, there appears to be no standard as to how much each service charges per resident.

Through past research and inquiries made during this current process, it was determined there is a varied range, while the average currently hovers at just under $4 per capita.

Smith Falls will cost $3.75 per capita based on Minden's 2021 census, plus HST, per year. The population in 2021 was 6,971. The cost will be adjusted to population changes indicated in the next federal census.

There also exists a fluctuation in contractual obligations expected by certain dispatching centers. Some offer a year-to-year contract while others require a 15-year contract to be signed.

Thibert said the department wanted to secure reliable, consistent, and long-standing dispatch services with the ability to achieve flexibility in its service contracts.

"We wanted to save some money and have a reliable contract," he said. "Smith Falls offers that."

The shorter five-year contractual option offered by Smith Falls Fire Dispatch Center coupled with a comparable per capita cost model is the best option for staff to recommend.

"There's absolutely no doubt this is a better system for being out on a fire call," Councillor Tammy McKelvey said.

The Smith Falls proposal indicates the start-up cost as an "approximate" amount. McKelvey said the municipality should insist on a concrete dollar amount before a contract is signed.

"What if it's $20,000?" she said.

"The set-up costs, I've confirmed that it's going to be $12,000," Thibert said. "It shouldn't be any more because that's what we agreed on."

McKelvey said she's concerned that the contract is a sole-sourced procurement. She said she'd rather it was the result of a request for proposals that had been issued by the township.

Cynthia Fletcher, the municipality's CAO, said an RFP can be issued if it's council's wish.

"I'm really eager to get going to a live dispatching service," Fletcher said. "I think we see huge benefit that two of our member municipalities also use this service."

"I'm not really certain that we will see a significant improvement if we went out for an RFP," Mayor Bob Carter said. "It just delays something that we need."

"Are we going to at least look at this agreement terms?" McKelvey said. "I've outlined some concerns I have with some of this."

Fletcher said she's noted the areas of concern for McKelvey and she offered to review them and make changes before an agreement is signed.

Two individuals charged for disturbance in Minden

The Haliburton Highlands Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) has charged two individuals in relation to an assault and robbery that occurred earlier this month.

On February 9, 2024, shortly after 4:30 a.m., members of the Haliburton Highlands Detachment responded to an assault and robbery with a weapon on Parkside Street in Minden. The victim was transported to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

A thorough investigation was conducted by the Haliburton Highlands OPP Crime Unit.

As a result of the investigation a 44-year-old of Minden Hills has been charged with:

- Aggravated assault
- Robbery using firearm
- Possession of a weapon
- Possession of a weapon while prohibited

A 28-year-old of Minden Hills has been charged with:

- Aggravated assault
- Robbery using firearm
- Possession of a weapon
- Fail to comply release order
- Possession of a firearm while prohibited

Both were held for a bail hearing.
The investigation is ongoing.

Investigators are asking that anyone with any information and have not spoken to police to contact Haliburton Highlands OPP at 705-286-1431 or the OPP Provincial Communications Centre at 1-888-310-1122.

The Ontario Provincial Police is committed to serving our province by protecting its' citizens, upholding the law, and preserving public safety.

Submitted by Haliburton Highlands OPP

HCSA closes all trails for the season

by **THOMAS SMITH**
Editor

The Haliburton County Snowmobile Association has wrapped up their season. It lasted for eight weeks.

"We've been depressed," says Paul Wilson, treasurer of the Haliburton County Snowmobile Association (HCSA).

"It's a beautiful day today at the HCSA," says Neil Vanderstoop. "The sun is shining but the trails are closed."

Historically, the shortest season they have ever had was in the 70s, says Vanderstoop.

After sending Doug Ford a trail guide, they recently received a thank you letter from the Premier of Ontario.

"The trails were nice for riding, but we kept it yellow, just in case," says Vanderstoop.

Yellow meant that the trails were rideable with caution, due to the unpredictable weather and changing conditions.

The HCSA was one of many snowmobiling associations that have had difficulties with maintaining and opening trails this year.

While some trails only opened for one week this season, some in southern Ontario never opened at all, says Vanderstoop.

All of their groomers are now in the shop, waiting to get summarised.

"Groomers are still ready," says Vanderstoop stoically.

We'd have to be reopening trails from scratch, says Paul Wilson, Treasurer of the HCSA.

Last year, the HCSA opened their trails on Dec. 20th and closed them on Mar. 16th. This year's snowmobiling season for the HCSA was four weeks shorter than last year's. It is highly unlikely that the trails will reopen before the spring thaw.

"We were only able to groom half of what our budget allowed," explains Wilson.

The HCSA has five groomers on standby to service their trails. A dedicated fleet of 16 groomers and three volunteers joined their efforts this season.

Groomers work in the evenings. Starting around 4 p.m., their shifts take them as late as 2 a.m.

"I had a 13.5 hour shift doing the northern part," says Wilson.

Lots of drifting snow and heavy storm cycles contribute to long hours grooming, says Wilson.

"It's a learned art," says Vanderstoop.

While many lakes were cleared for use this year, Halls Lake was never staked.

"We didn't have the confidence in it," says Vanderstoop.

"We can't stake a lake until it has eight inches of clear, solid ice," explains Vanderstoop.

Lakes are still safe to unstake them at the end of the season and the HCSA has strict parameters regarding safety.

"No one's happy," says Vanderstoop. "I've gone around to different businesses and I've done everything I can. It's tough for everybody."

Map sales, trail passes, and advertising numbers were quite good this year, regardless of the weather, says Vanderstoop.

While the numbers don't quite meet the numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic, trail passes were likely 10 per cent higher than pre-pandemic numbers, says Vanderstoop.

"We have not stopped," assures Vanderstoop. "There's turnover, paperwork that needs to be done, trails to look after, culverts, and bridges, and trails to be fixed."

"To trail pass buyers and businesses, we are not going to let them down," says Vanderstoop. "We're going to forge ahead."

"We would like to thank our landowners, our volunteers, and our advertisers," says Vanderstoop passionately. "Without them, nothing would happen. Especially without the landowners, nothing would happen."

Throughout the year, the HCSA is looking forward to participating in events such as the Stanhope Airport Fly-In.

Although a date has not been set for the AGM in April, everyone is welcome to attend, volunteer with the HCSA and enquire about job opportunities.

"There's still lots happening, we don't get to stop," assures Vanderstoop.

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Fulfilling graduation dreams

VIVIAN COLLINGS
Editor

Jennifer Abbott has been helping make the dreams of graduates come true for the past 11 years.

Make Dreams Come True is a not-for-profit local organization that collects donated dresses or suits, shoes, jewelry, and other items to give back to grads free of charge.

This ensures graduates of any age can enjoy their special day without worrying about the cost.

Last year, she helped 15 kids fulfill their prom and grad visions.

"It's really a community effort and is something that's truly needed here because of rising prices," Abbott said.

The idea came from one local woman receiving a donated dress 11 years ago.

"After that, we knew there was a greater need. We knew there would be so many more people benefiting from something like this," she said. "I thought it was a fabulous idea."

It began with a small storefront space in Castle Antiques in downtown Haliburton.

"But then COVID-19 hit, so I keep all of the items in my home," Abbott explained.

When someone is in need of a suit or dress, they message Abbott directly, and she gets to work.

"If they have a picture of the style and colour they're looking for, I go through all my inventory, and then I will put together around five different options, and package it all up to send home with them. That way, they can try everything on in their own homes and decide," Abbott said.

Whatever doesn't get chosen gets brought back for someone else to enjoy in the future.

"Whenever I find out what colour and style they choose, that's when I get to make up a gift bag. They get nail polish, makeup, jewelry, and shoes if they need them," she said.

> "After that, we knew there was a greater need. We knew there would be so many more people benefiting from something like this," ... "I thought it was a fabulous idea."
>
> — JENNIFER ABBOTT MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE

Over the years, Make Dreams come true has teamed up with local businesses who provide their services free of charge to those who receive a suit or dress.

"Salons donate time for hairstyles, cuts, and manicures or pedicures, and Chantel Smith gives the graduate and their family a free mini photo session."

Abbott is now accepting donations for dresses, suits, shoes, and new makeup and hair products.

She can be reached by phone or text at 705-286-0906 for the drop-off location.

If anything gets donated that she can't use, she donates back to local organizations.

"We just want to capture the memories," Abbott said. "It feels good to be able to help as many people as I can."

Chantel Smith Photography offers mini photoshoot sessions for each person helped by Make Dreams Come True in their new dress or suit. /Photos by Chantel Smith

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IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION

The 2024 Interim tax bills were mailed on Friday, February 23, 2024. If you have not received your bill(s) prior to the March due date, please contact our office.

The Interim tax bill will be payable in two installments: March 22 and May 24, 2024. This bill has been calculated using the 2023 annualized assessment multiplied by 50% of the 2023 applicable tax rate(s). Payments received after February 12 may not be reflected on your tax bill. Please note that any overdue amounts shown on your tax bill do not include penalty/interest for February and March. Please contact our office for a current balance at 705-286-1260 email: admin@mindenhills.ca.

Property owners are responsible to provide to the Municipal Office written notification of any address change. As per the Ontario Municipal Act, 2001, failure to receive your tax bill does not exempt penalty charges from being applied to a tax account.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW) EVENT DATES

Mark your calendars for our 2024 HHW events:
• May 18 • July 6 • August 24
Events will run from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena (55 Parkside Street). Visit www.mindenhills.ca/hazardouswaste for full details.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We are currently seeking energetic and highly motivated individuals for the following positions:
• Supervisor of Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries
• Community Services Casual Operator • Parks Summer Students
• Cultural Centre Summer Students
Please visit our website at www.mindenhills.ca/careers/ for a complete list of available positions and how to apply.

COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL, IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted with a hybrid model of in-person (Council Chambers) and electronic participation in accordance with the Municipal Act. Meetings begin at 9:00 AM unless otherwise noted. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:
• March 14 – Regular Council Meeting • March 28 – Regular Council Meeting • April 11 – Regular Council Meeting
• April 25 – Regular Council Meeting
Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link on the Township CivicWeb Portal at https://mindenhills.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingTypeList.aspx. Visit our website for more information.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Clocks will spring forward one hour at 2am on Sunday, March 10th and the Minden Hills Fire Department is recommending residents install new batteries in their smoke and carbon monoxide alarms when they change their clocks. Don't forget to check the date on your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms they need to be replaced every 10 years.

SPRING LOAD RESTRICTIONS (HALF LOADS) IN EFFECT

Half Load weight restrictions are placed on roadways and posted each year in the spring for approximately 1-2 months. Persons contravening this regulation will be prosecuted under Section 122 of The Highway Traffic Act. Please watch for and obey posted signage. Visit www.mindenhills.ca for updates.

MINDEN HILLS CULTURAL CENTRE

• Archie Stouffer Elementary School presents their 1st annual student exhibit with the theme of what Minden means to the artist. Selections for our permanent collection and new acquisitions are also on display. The exhibits will be on display in the Agnes Jamieson Gallery until March 30. Gallery open Tuesday – Saturday from 10 am – 4 pm. Admission is by donation.

MINDEN HILLS Cultural Centre

• The Knitting Village provides free knitting lessons for children ages 11-14. The first drop-in class is scheduled for Tuesday, March 5 from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre, 176 Bobcaygeon Road. All materials are supplied.

• Celebrate International Women's Day with the documentary Under the Willow Tree at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre on Thursday, March 7 at 5 pm

• Stop by Nature's Place for FREE drop-in activities during March Break Visit www.mindenhills.ca/calendar for details on these programs/events.

7 Milne Street, PO Box 359, Minden, ON K0M 2K0 705-286-1260 Toll Free: 1-844-277-1260 Fax 705-286-4917 Township.Minden.Hills Minden Hills@twpmindenhills

Minden waives fairgrounds fee for summer tractor pull

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Minden Hills council did its part to clear the path toward this summer's tractor pull.

Minden Kinsmen Club Tractor Pull and Show and Shine will take place in June at the Minden Fairgrounds. Council agreed during its Feb. 29 meeting to waive the fairgrounds $2,668 rental fee in support of the event.

The rental fee was cleared by way of the Community Grant and Fee Waiver Program, which is meant to provide financial assistance to community groups and organizations within the municipality to assist with activities or special events.

"The program also promotes the recognition and value of these groups as they contribute to the well-being and growth of the community, and help the municipality retain a strong community focus," according to Candace McGuigan, the township's community services director, in a report to council.

As per Policy #91, waiver requests have to be submitted by Oct. 31 in order to form part the annual budget deliberations.

McGuigan said the department has received seven requests within the reporting deadline. As per policy, all requests/applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis, as the budget allows, she said.

Organizations that have agreements with the municipality related to the use of the Fairgrounds are eligible to ask that up to 100 per cent of the fee be waived.

The value of the fee waiver request is in the amount of $26,667.93. Applications exceeding $2,000 must seek approval from council.

The 2023 Community Service Department budget had $21,500 for Policy #91 Community Grant and Fee Waiver Program and has included the same amount for the 2024 Community Service Department budget.

The total waived fees for 2024 is currently $16, 855.04.

"Staff do anticipate receiving more applications throughout the year," McGuigan said in her report.

Area public health boards petition province for merger

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Given their history collaborating, it only makes sense for the local and Peterborough health boards to merge.

The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPR) and Peterborough Public Health (PPH) announced Feb. 28 that their respective health boards have given the nod to a voluntary merger.

As part of the process to bring the proposed merger to fruition, both boards will submit a joint voluntary merger application to the provincial government by Apr. 2.

The application will spell out how a proposed merger would benefit the communities they serve, while supporting outcomes and priorities identified for public health by the Ministry of Health.

Mergers of public health units require provincial legislative change and, as such, this will not be definitive until the province has approved this and commits adequate funding for its success later in the year.

Both PPH and HKPR District Health Unit will continue to operate independently during the provincial review period.

The Ministry of Health announced in August 2023 plans to strengthen the public health sector by offering one-time funding, resources, and supports to public health agencies that decide to voluntarily merge by Jan. 1, 2025.

And that got the wheels turning on an effort to explore the effects of a merger of neighbouring boards.

In Nov. 2023, a Joint Board Merger Exploration Working Group was established with representatives from both health units and external consulting firm Sense & Nous to prepare a comprehensive feasibility assessment report.

Findings were recently presented to both health boards for consideration.

Both boards said in a joint press release that, throughout the process, it was identified that both the HKPR District Health Unit and PPH have an extensive history of collaboration and share similar geographic, demographic, health status and population characteristics.

Both organizations are dedicated to reducing health inequities and addressing the most pressing public health challenges faced by the urban, rural, and Indigenous communities that they serve, according to the press release.

During their board meeting on Feb. 15, HKPR decided to proceed with a proposal to voluntary merge with the Peterborough crowd.

"We have been diligent in the timeframe provided to review and consider all possible outcomes and impacts of a voluntary merger," said David Marshall, chairperson of the HKPR board.

"Ultimately, we agreed that by merging with Peterborough Public Health we can strengthen our capacity to deliver exceptional public health programs and services and to better respond to the unique needs of our small urban and rural communities."

PPH's board decided during its Feb. 21 meeting to proceed with a proposal to voluntary merger with HKPR.

> "This process revealed that joining together offers us the best pathway possible to protect and promote public health"
>
> — JOY LACHICA
> CHAIRPERSON OF PETERBOROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH

"Over the past several months, we have carefully examined how a merger can strengthen the services that we provide to our communities," said Joy Lachica, the Peterborough board's chairperson.

"This process revealed that joining together offers us the best pathway possible to protect and promote public health and keep our residents healthy. We are thrilled to start this journey together."

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Nature Art
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Thursday, March 14
Vegetable Animals
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Wild Life Sketches
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Nature's Place

MH summer ice was a one-time offering last year

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It could be that summer ice in Minden Hills this year will be limited to cottagers' beverages at lakefronts and on evening decks.

Council heard during its Feb. 29 meeting that the township's Department of Community Services sent out ice allocation requests to user groups for July and August.

Councillor Bob Sisson said the idea last year to put down ice and tend a rink during the summer months was a one-year trial.

"We had thoughts of maybe having a big hockey school attend," he said. "That went by the wayside."

And, well, the municipality lost its shirt on the venture.

Sisson said about $20,000 was spent in hydro costs in July to maintain the ice. And he said probably only $3,000 was made on the venture.

"I think we should scrap summer ice," Sisson said.

Coun. Tammy McKelvey reiterated that a lot of money was lost on the pilot project. But, she said, there's another concern that bodes unfavourably for offering summer ice to winter activity enthusiasts.

"We continually get reports that we don't have enough staff to do burials," she said. "We don't have enough staff to put in the winter outdoor rink. We don't have enough staff to do a lot of different things."

McKelvey said the July ice should be ruled out. Local groups are booking ice time up to May and that's costly enough for the township.

"We really need to look at the cost of this," she said. "You are looking at $19,000 (or) $20,000."

Sparking dialogue about the Future of Ontario Farmland

The annual Farmland Forum, hosted by the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT), is coming to Elora Ontario on Mar. 21, 2024. The full-day hybrid event at The GrandWay Events Centre as well as online will feature guest speakers and discussion panels.

The 2024 Farmland Forum, The Future of Ontario Farmland, celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Ontario Farmland Trust with a return to the foundational dialogues and round-table discussions that sparked the creation of OFT. This year's forum is a pivotal gathering for exploring innovative solutions to the pressing challenges of farmland preservation in Ontario. As we confront the realities of farmland loss, the forum will delve into necessary policy reforms and strategic approaches to protect our agricultural lands.

"This year's forum is about recognizing that protecting farmland is only part of the equation," says Martin Straathof, Executive Director of OFT. "Discussions will not only focus on farmland protection but also on breaking down barriers for new farmers to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for Ontario's agri-food sector. Anyone who has an interest in engaging more with these intersecting issues should attend."

The forum takes a holistic view by addressing the importance of policy for farmland preservation alongside the lack of succession planning for Ontario's food system as a whole, and the role municipalities and organizations can play in supporting land access for new and young farmers.

The day-long event will include keynotes and panels by agricultural and environmental sector leaders, land use planners, and food systems policy experts, as well as special opening remarks by Mayor Shawn Watters, Township of Centre Wellington. With ample time for table discussions alongside concurrent breakout rooms for online participants, the forum is an excellent opportunity to network with future minded agricultural and conservation professionals.

The OFT's province-wide mission is to protect and preserve farmlands and associated agricultural, natural, and cultural features of the countryside. The charitable organization advances its mission through land securement, stewardship, policy research, and education.

Registration and more information available online.

Submitted by Ontario Farmland Trust

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InOtherWords

Columns and Letters to the Editor

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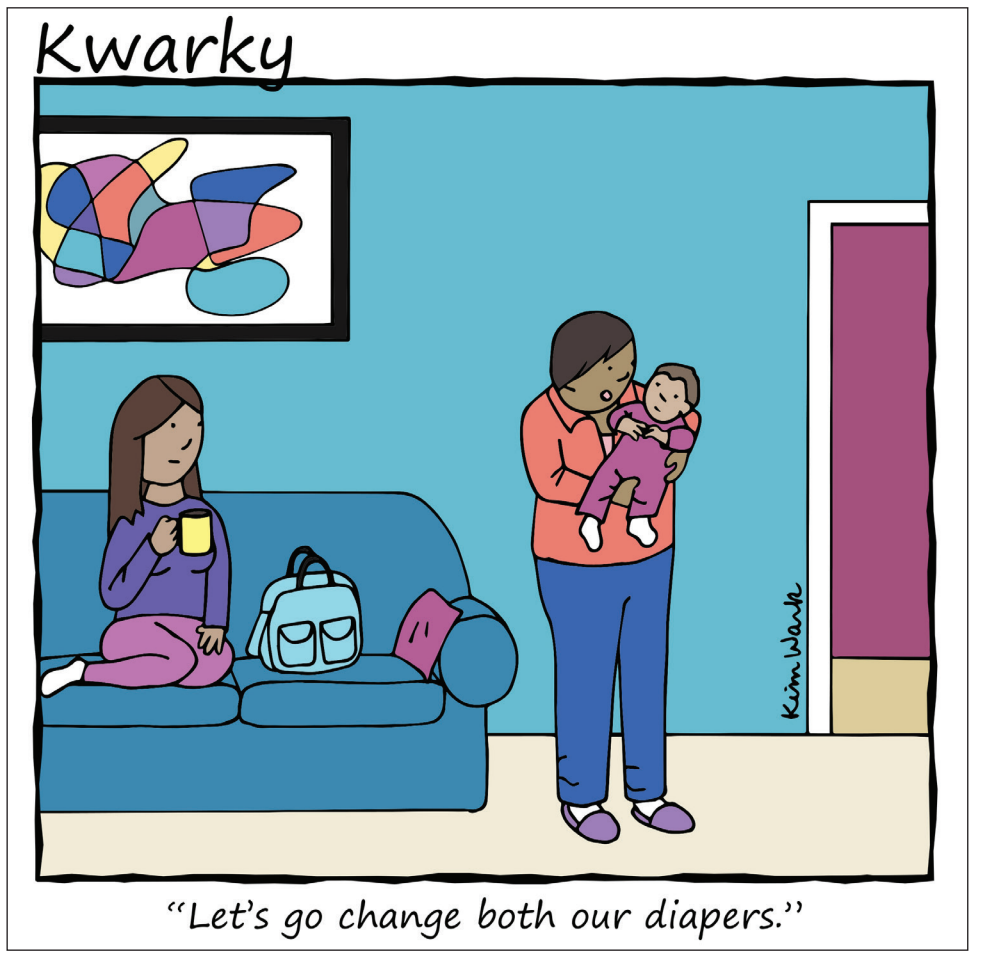


Tom's winter that never was

THIS WINTER was going to be a season of firsts for me.

First time skiing, first time ice fishing, first time snowmobiling, first time snowshoeing, heck, first time watching an ice racing Grand Prix, maybe even first time skating if I can get over my fear of falling.

I had big plans for myself when I began working for the Minden Times. I thought that this was the year of new experiences. Mother nature has had different plans for me.

As I sit in my office, my weather app is telling me that it is 14 degrees outside right now. Water from the spring's melt drips off the roof, mocking me of the adventures that could have been.

I started only a few months ago with big dreams of these winter adventures that I could write about.

THOMAS SMITH
Editor

These dreamt-of adventures quickly changed into investigating businesses that are facing hardships due to the warm weather.

Neil Vanderstoop, president of the Haliburton County Snowmobile Association says that he is still going to get out ice fishing at least one more time this year.

As I drive throughout Minden, I can see the giant pools of water forming on the time of the lakes, reflecting beams of sunlight.

On a recent trip to the Clarington area, I walked along the lake and saw around thirty people fishing off the pier into Lake Ontario.

This got me thinking. Do I need to be able to physically stand on the ice?

In all fairness, I didn't see any actual fish being caught from Lake Ontario.

I wonder, is shore fishing a viable option, even when there is some ice on the lakes?

If a fish will bite when sitting in an ice hut, will they judge me simply because I am fishing from the shore?

I did get to check a couple things off my bucket list this winter. I finally got to attend the Dorset Snowball Winter Carnival. I also managed to watcha day of ice racing at the Minden Fairgrounds (although it was not my first time in attendance).

While the winter season is quickly approaching its end, I am already preparing for next winter's season.

Why aren't the ice races advertised more and made a bigger tourist draw during the winter time?

I met some people at the ice races who own cottages up here, but they have never heard of the ice races in the 20 plus years of cottaging in the area.

Can something be done to advertise such an exciting wintertime event?

Perhaps next year, I will see a bigger crowd at the ice races, or get on a snowmobile, or go ice fishing. Mark my words. At this time next year you'll be seeing me barreling down the skiihills. Maybe I'll even attempt skating for the first time in my life and see some of you in the ER.

I'll build my own ice fishing hut that can double as a houseboat.

I am looking forward to the magic of springtime in Haliburton County and the beauty of the summer.

Soon enough, the Dorset Lookout Tower will be opening to visitors, bass season will begin, and the No-See-Ums will be biting my eyes out when I leave the house.

It is bittersweet to know winter is ending when it feels like it hardly began. However, I warmly welcome the flu-ourishing of spring. In nature, in my garden, and in myself. Who knows what adventures the springtime will bring, or what mysteries the melting of snow may uncover.

For now, you can find me suntanning (getting a sunburn) on the front lawn. I'll catch you next year, Snow Miser.

Maple syrup, an alternate history

I AM not, by any means, an expert on maple syrup, especially in terms of collection or processing. But I will say I am world-class at consuming it.

Also, I'm very curious about the origin of the things I love.

That's why I think it might be interesting to question and theorize how maple syrup collection came to be.

My theory is that one of our primitive ancestors was just sitting under a maple tree in spring minding his own business, when an errant arrow hit the tree and lodged right over his head at an angle, thereby tapping it.

STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

This caused him to gasp – as anyone would – and while his mouth was open a single drop of sap fell upon his tongue. It tasted better than the puddle water he normally drank.

So, he put a cup underneath the tree's wound and collected a bunch and took it home to his mom. And his mom said, "It's not bad but I prefer hot drinks…"

So, she put it in a container over a fire and went about her business. Then, after a while she remembered it. When she retrieved the container, she saw that it was syrupy, thick, and actually very sweet.

Unfortunately, she did not have much of a sweet tooth, so she started to walk to the spring to dump it and clean out the container. But, as fate would have it, a cow and calf moose started chasing her, which forced her to run carelessly through the woods. That's why she then collided with a young fellow who happened to be carrying a stack of pancakes. No one knows why, so don't ask.

Now here's where it gets a little far-fetched. The moose stopped chasing her after feeling bad about the havoc it had wrought.

But I digress.

The young fellow was indeed strange. In fact, he was the only one in the clan who liked pancakes just as they were, without a single topping. So, when he bumped into the woman who had spilled this tree syrup all over his pancakes, he was kind of disappointed.

"You've ruined my pancakes," he said, probably. (I'm cleaning up this story for the kids.)

"Yes," she said. "I'm sorry, those bland pancakes are now sweet, sticky, and syrupy. And who would want that?"

She then rolled her eyes.

This did not exactly endear her to him, but it did get him thinking, mostly about how he was going to clean that syrup off his plate. And, also if he could fake whiplash and get a primitive lawyer to take his case.

While he was contemplating all this, he ran into another friend. But this was not an ordinary friend. It was one of those friends who will eat anything on a dare. You know the type. We all have one.

And while these days, they are looked upon as a bit weird, back then, when they were still discovering what was edible, they were valued members of the group – especially when a new mushroom was discovered.

In any case, this guy ate the syrup covered pancakes and loved them. And, more importantly, he survived.

The rest is history. Soon, the clan made a point of shooting arrows into maple trees, collecting the sap, and boiling it. And the pancake guy started doing a pretty good business on Sunday mornings….

His friend – the real hero – was last heard saying, "Hemlock tea? Don't mind if I do."

InOtherWords

Columns and Letters to the Editor

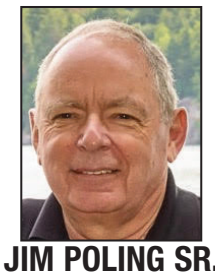
The bird warning us

IT'S BEEN an odd winter and as it fades into spring it seems to be getting odder.

One of this winter's oddest things is the absence of birds. A lone blue jay or a raven has come by my place, but little else.

Some Ontario birds do not fly south for the winter. Often, I can look out a winter window and see a variety of sparrows, chickadees, nuthatches and finches. Or, if I'm really lucky, a large pileated woodpecker or a red Northern Cardinal. Not this winter.

Perhaps I'm seeing fewer birds because we are not putting out the usual amounts of seed. Rain on the snow has created icy patches where the bird feeders are hanging and walking out to them is treacherous.



JIM POLING SR.
From Shaman's Rock

One particular bird I like to watch for, and haven't seen in a long time, is the Gray Jay, also known as the Canada Jay or more famously the Wisakedjak.

Wisakedjak is the Algonquian name for the robin-sized songbird many of us know as the whiskey jack. It's that dark grey and white and very trusting little bird that might land on your open hand if sees something to steal or to eat.

It also is known as the Camp Robber because of its boldness in stealing food from a picnic table or frying pan.

A variety of studies have been done, and are still being done, on whisky jack populations. The studies generally show population declines of up to 50 per cent, particularly in Algonquin Park and surrounding areas.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) considers the whiskey jack a "least-concern species" but there is mounting evidence that global warming is reducing its populations in its southern range, which in Ontario is the region along Highway 60.

Warmer winters are affecting whiskey jack winter food caches.

The birds use sticky saliva to roll bits of food into gooey packages they stuff into tree bark nooks and crannies. They hide thousands of these frozen food packages and depend on them for winter survival.

When winter temperatures climb above freezing, as they often have this year, the food caches thaw and rot, leaving them inedible, or at least greatly reduced in nutritional value. Less nutritional food limits the whiskey jack's ability to reproduce.

Some studies already have shown no whiskey jacks remaining in some parts of their southern range. At least one study predicts the birds will become extinct in Algonquin Park.

Caching food for winter tells a lot about what is inside these birds' little heads. They have to remember where they have hidden thousands of little food caches in hundreds of hectares of forest.

They are among the world's smartest birds with a body-to-brain ratio very close to that of a human.

Any critter that clever has a good chance of adapting and surviving. It may be disappearing along the Highway 60 region but hopefully will move its range further north.

In some Indigenous legends the whiskey jack was said to be created by the Great Spirit as a teacher for humans. Its chattering and whistling often is taken as a warning of nearby predators.

Indigenous guides in Yukon tell stories of Wisakedjak singing and flitting from tree to tree to lead a lost and starving hunter home. The birds have a "whisper song," which is a series of soft, melodious notes interspersed with quiet clicks, lasting up to a minute.

They also will make little snapping sounds with their bills when chasing intruders away.

Diminishing whiskey jack populations are teaching us that we must start taking better care of our environment if we are to survive. They are telling us that we are taking too much from the Earth and causing the seasons to change.

Global warming is bringing more floods, droughts, heatwaves, wildfires and hurricanes. This more intense and severe weather is killing livestock, driving down crop yields and turning some growing areas into swamps or sandpits. Wild weather also interferes with the quick transport of food to where it is needed.

Wisakedjak's warning to us is appreciated, but not really necessary. We can look out our windows and see the environmental changes every day.

Minden Memories

The Pogue family going for an outing. /Photo submitted by the Minden Hills Cultural Centre

Aging together as community 'Town Hall Meeting'

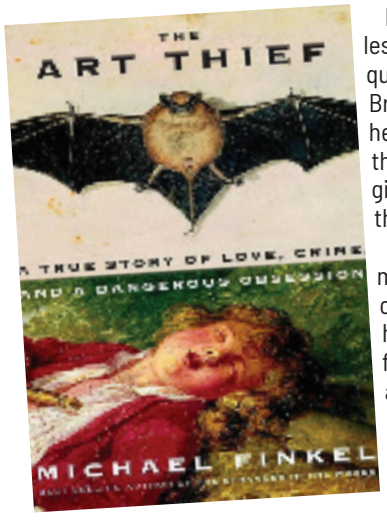
Thursday, Mar. 21 at 4 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. at the Haliburton Legion

Please join us as we:
- Share the results of our ATAC Community Survey
- Create a plan for next steps - What? How? Who

Light refreshments will be provided. Please RSVP by Monday, Mar. 18 through emailing agingtogetherhc@gmail.comor or on Facebook.

Submitted by Aging Together as Community Haliburton Highlands.

HCPL's Book of the Week



For centuries, works of art have been stolen in countless ways from all over the world, but no one has been quite as successful at it as the master thief Stéphane Breitwieser. Carrying out more than two hundred heists over nearly eight years—in museums and cathedrals all over Europe—Breitwieser, along with his girlfriend who worked as his lookout, stole more than three hundred objects.

Unlike most thieves, Breitwieser never stole for money. Instead, he displayed all his treasures in a pair of secret rooms where he could admire them to his heart's content. Until it all fell apart in spectacular fashion. This is a riveting story of art, crime, love, and an insatiable hunger to possess beauty at any cost.

The Art Thief by Michael Finkel is available to borrow from the Haliburton County Public Library.

How big media companies are making it harder to find product reviews

This is the first of a two-part series about finding reliable product reviews online.

As modern consumers we are overwhelmed by variety. Looking for a jar of tomato sauce in the grocery store? Do you want chunky? Thick? Thin? Do you want one flavoured with garlic and herbs? Spicy or sweet? Or both?

ERIN KERNOHAN-BERNING
Humans and Technology

This curse of variety exists in pretty much every product category we can think of – can you think of an item that there exists only one type of? Even something as rudimentary as toilet paper comes in a staggering variety of options.

When faced with this level of variety, we can become preoccupied with purchasing the "best" thing. Afterall, if we are spending our time and money to make a purchase, we want to be sure that out of the dizzying array of choices that we get something that fulfills our needs. Online reviews can be helpful in this regard. Or rather, up until recently they were helpful in this regard.

In February, Gisel Navarro, managing editor at HouseFresh, raised the alarm that traffic to their in-depth home air purifier product reviews had steeply dropped. Analysing keywords that had previously brought them traffic, they found that the top search results were all from large media brands, many had never reviewed air purifiers before, and some wouldn't be expected to review air purifiers at all (for example, *Rolling Stone*, *Popular Science*, and *Forbes* magazines). Furthermore, many of these "Best of" lists seemed very similar, including featuring a product that was no longer available, quotes from the same expert, and photos from the same photographer.

So why would these magazines suddenly start getting into the online product review business? And why do their reviews look so… samey? A combination of Google's search algorithm, search engine optimization practices, and the evolution of the magazine is creating the perfect storm for reliable product reviews to get lost in.

According to Jeff Jarvis in his book titled *Magazine*, it is not unusual for magazines to review products – for example, *Good Housekeeping* started product testing in 1901 and would only feature ads for products they approved. Providing consumer information has been a core part of what magazines do. What has changed is the seismic shift that the business model of the magazine underwent with the advent of the internet.

It helps to understand how magazines have historically made money. Jarvis states that since the 20th century the magazine has been supported by advertisers as much as it has been by readers purchasing and subscribing. Before the internet, magazines charged advertisers on the assumption that when a company purchased ad space on page 4, every reader would see that ad even if they didn't read that page. Ads on the internet work far differently – through analytics, companies can see how many times their ads are viewed, how many of those views result in clicks, and if that click turned into a purchase.

So, the goal for profitability becomes getting as many eyes on a website ad as possible, and that means climbing higher in Google's search rankings. This is where search engine optimization comes in.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of ensuring that your website meets the ranking criteria of a particular search engine. The better you meet the criteria, the higher up in the search results your website will appear. According to Glen Allsopp at detailed.com, a website that focuses on search engine optimization, 16 media companies are consistently rising to the top of Google's search results.

In Allsopp's 2023 rundown of SEO practices among these large media companies, he highlights the practice of using affiliate links (through which a site can earn commission for an online sale) featured across a few websites owned by a single media company. Hearst, for example, ran the same article featuring the same lamp with the same affiliate link on its sites for *Popular Mechanics*, *Country Living*, and *House Beautiful*.

Another example is Dotdash, which has more than one product testing facility in the United States. This product testing appears to be re-used by writers as source material for "Best of" product reviews across several Dotdash brands including *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Real Simple*, and *The Spruce*.

There are also examples of companies using third party product reviews, such as Arena Group, owner of *Sports Illustrated*, to provide content on their websites. Futurism, a technology news site, recently investigated the possibility that some of those third-party reviews featured on *Sports Illustrated* were AI-generated.

The difficulty for consumers is that if one of these media companies puts out poor quality information, bolstered by magazine brand recognition, it easily drowns out more in-depth product reviews. In the next installment of Humans and Technology, we'll learn how we can find better product reviews so we can make better purchasing decisions.

Hydro Assistance Now Available

Effective Mar. 1st, 2024, the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) income eligibility thresholds will increase by up to 35 percent so more households will be eligible. The OESP provides a monthly hydro credit for eligible customers to make electricity more affordable.

Under the new criteria, a single person can qualify with an after-tax income of up to $38,000 and a 2- person household can qualify with an after-tax income of up to $54,000. These are just two examples as income thresholds increase with the number of people in the household.

OESP credits range from $35 to $75 a month depending on household income and the number of people residing in the home. Higher credits are provided for customers using certain medical devices, those who heat their homes with electricity or are Indigenous or living with Indigenous family members.

Updates to Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)

Following suit, Low-Income Energy Assistance Program income eligibility thresholds will match the new OESP levels. LEAP provides emergency financial help to eligible households who have arrears on their electricity bill. Effective March 1st, LEAP grants are also increasing with the maximum grant amounts rising for those who heat primarily:

- Without Electricity: From $500 to $650
- With Electricity: From $600 to $780

"As Client Services Coordinator of Heat Bank Haliburton County, I've witnessed firsthand the positive impact that hydro credits have on local households. These credits aren't just about reducing electricity bills; they're about reducing the financial strain that many families face in covering the costs of living and basic essentials," says Rachel Gillooly.

Submitted by Central Food Network

Singing with heart and soul

A warm crowd came out on Friday to see Karen Frybort with Mike Clewlow and Jimmy Stewart. The event was hosted at the MInden Curling Club. /TIM YANO Special to the *Times*

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WEALTH MANAGEMENT
Patrick Senior, Gord Schakelaar and Nathan Jenner
Patrick Senior
Financial Advisor at Assante Financial Management Ltd.

With a Wealth of Knowledge Comes Confident Insights and Strategy

On February 1st, 2024, Patrick Senior, Financial Advisor, joined Assante Financial Management Ltd. and has joined alongside Gord Schakelaar, Senior Financial Planning Advisor, and Nathan Jenner, Financial Advisor.

At the core of Patrick's professional mission lies a deep-seated dedication to fostering genuine connections, nurturing trust, and leveraging expertise to empower clients on their financial journeys. As a seasoned financial advisor with over ten years of experience in banking, insurance, mortgage advising, small business credit planning, and investing, he brings a wealth of experience and knowledge, particularly in retirement planning and the nuanced art of decumulating retirement assets.

Patrick's mission is to establish authentic relationships built on trust and respect and provide clients with the insights and strategies needed to navigate retirement planning, reach their goals, and decumulate assets confidently.

Additionally, he seeks to build enduring relationships beyond financial strategies by prioritizing transparent communication and collaboration. Values that chart a course toward financial freedom, security, and fulfillment–grounded in trust, integrity, and a commitment to achieving client goals and aspirations.

With a firm belief in the transformative power of trust and relationship-building, Patrick is honoured to serve as atrusted advisor and partner as clients navigate the complexities of retirement planning and beyond. Together, clients can transform dreams into legacies that endure for generations. He looks forward to continuing to offer wealth management services throughout the Huntsville region.

Patrick Senior, Financial Advisor at Assante Financial Management Ltd.
Email: psenior@assante.com C: 226-228-4609 O: 705-789-7940
395 Centre Street North - Suite #300 Huntsville ON P1H 2P9

Local tattoo artists bring apprentice under their wings

by **THOMAS SMITH**
Editor

Bronwin Ironside and Samina Khokhar opened their dream custom electric tattoo studio in Minden in October of 2022. Both artists operate their businesses at the 105 Bobcaygeon Road location under the names B. Ironside Art and Latitude Tattoo.

"In 2008, I went to Thailand after dropping out of university. I found someone to mentor me in Thailand and I thought I wanted to travel and I also wanted to learn how to tattoo," says Samina Khokhar. "That's kinda where it all began."

"I started in the tattoo industry when I was 18," says Brownwin Ironside. "And I just turned 38, so this is my 20th year."

"She's older and I'm more experienced," says Ironside, with a laugh.

After Khokhar worked in Toronto to hone their skills as a tattoo artist and Ironside started tattooing in Peterborough, the pair faithfully met six years ago at a tattoo studio in Bancroft.

"Usually people who pick flash are-"

"They're enthusiasts," says Khokhar

They're collectors, we call them collectors," explains Ironside. "Cause they are collecting images like how someone would collect paintings except your body is the walls."

"I had a client and her sister come in the other day, I drew up some Halloween flash last year and these girls reached out to me in January and they're like 'we really want the horror themed stuff that you drew."

"People who go for horror tattoos love the Halloween season anyway but they're gonna get it no matter what."

"It's all artwork, it's just how it translate into a different medium," explains Ironside. "Tattooing in some respects can be looked at as just painting in ink with steel brushes."

"That stab you really fast," says Khokhar, with a laugh.

"It's a commitment. Once you get your first one though, you're like 'I can do that again, and again, and again," says Khokhar. "I was freaked out when I got my first tattoo."

"I think everybody is to some degree whether or not they admit it," says Ironside.

Choosing a tattoo is an extremely personal decision, says Ironside.

"When you do a really meaningful tattoo for someone that is connected to them on a deep emotional level, their reaction to the tattoo afterwards is so profound and they're so appreciative that you were able to bring that to life for them," says Khokhar. "That's really special. Those stand out in my mind.

"When you finish a tattoo and they are just so blown away and they have so much gratitude and everybody cries," says Khkohar.

"Life's too short to take it too seriously," says Ironside.

"We're always thinking of flash to do," explains Khokhar.

Ironside and Khokhar decided to work out of Minden after careful consideration.

"In the tattoo industry, it is important if you can manage it, not to step on other people's toes, out of respect."

"We're feeling the need for a demographic. In leaving where we were, it's still accessible for clients from the Bancroft area. We still regularly have clients coming from Barry's Bay and stuff like that, but it's still accessible for our Peterborough clients, Toronto clients, and people throughout the area."

Clients have come from all over. On the day of the interview, clients were travelling from Guelph and Lindsay for a tattoo.

"Since we've been here, we have some regulars now in Minden," explains Khokhar. "People have received us really well."

"Genuinely, we just needed people to be kind for a hot minute," says Ironside. "Minden has been really wonderful for that."

"People have been very welcoming," says Khokhar. "They come in and they say hi, just check in on us even if they're not getting a tattoo."

The only issues the artists have faced is a leaky roof and the patriarchal norms of the male-dominated tattoo industry.

"We've established ourselves as artists in the community so people know who we are. Being a woman in the industry is hard," says Khokhar. "Because it is a very male dominated industry."

"I guess when you are used to being a woman in the tattoo industry and how hard that is and how that has been your reality for decades, you don't really look at it anymore. It feels everyday," says Ironside.

"It feels normal. That I feel is the biggest struggle," says Khokhar. "It's hard to get exposure in the industry as a woman."

"People take you less seriously, it's like being a woman in music. It's impossible a lot of the time. A lot of things are gatekept, but things are a lot better than they used to be." says Ironside.

From left to right, Samina Khokhar, Bronwin Ironside, and Gina Horswood pose in front of the storefront of their tattoo studios, located at 105 Bobcaygeon Road in Minden. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

"In the tattoo industry, you always want to make payroll when the sun is shining," explains Ironside. "You want to make your money in the summer so it can get you through the winter but that translates to anyone in the tattoo industry is like 'winter always sucks'."

Post-christmas, the tattoo industry is hit especially hard with a great lull, says Ironside.

"But that being said, we're booked in advance so thankfully that isn't necessarily an issue for us," explains Ironside. "So, we've got some comfort in our experience that way because we always have a draw because of that."

Summer is the busiest season overall for tattoos

"As soon as you can start wearing t-shirts," says Khokhar.

"Everybody sees other people's tattoos and be like 'Oh, I think I'd like to do that'. Everyone gets inspired that way," says Ironside. "Best time to get tattooed though, is winter. Because you're not swimming, you don't have to deal with UV exposure."

The COVID-19 pandemic was exceptionally difficult for those in the tattoo industry.

"COVID-19 really messed up our industry, period." says Khokhar.

"We were the first ones to get shut down and the last ones to be allowed open."

"If there's ever a pandemic like that again, it will be a struggle," says Khokhar.

"Obviously, financially, that was really hard. But also, when you are busy all the time, because tattooing is your whole life," explains Ironside.

"If I'm driving, Samina's texting her clients and vice versa, we're talking about what we're doing, and then we get home and we draw for 2 or 3 hours," explains Ironside. "When the pandemic hit and we were at home, that took all of it away. You just didn't know what to do with ourselves at all. It gave us a bit of an identity crisis."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Khokhar became a hypnotherapist and Ironside began selling merchandise.

While Ironside and Khokhar have had apprentices throughout their careers, Gina Horswood is the first apprentice out of their new studio space in Minden. After Ironside and Khokhar opened their custom electric tattoo studios in Minden, Horswood saw it as the perfect opportunity to begin an apprenticeshi. Horswood's apprenticeship began in July of last year.

After working as a musician and dabbling into the corporate world, Horswood returned to drawing during the pandemic.

"I drew a lot in high school. I did graphic design at University for a little while but I got out of art when I took up music," explains Horswood." "The pandemic hit and I had a little bit of time off and just started drawing again and kinda fell back in love with it."

"I went and got a tattoo at the studio that these ladies were working at and just asked about how one would go about being apprenticed, " explains Horswood. "That was about four years ago. It's been a long time coming."

Horswood moved to Canada in 2012, having grown up in Chinchilla, Queensland, Australia.

"It's been great," says Horswood. "It's been amazing. I've learned a lot. I'm very fortunate in that I get to work with two female artists," says Horswood."It's a constant learning process, which is very good for my brain."

"You don't often get this lucky on your first go," says Horswood.

In addition to the tattoo artist apprenticeship, Horswood teaches music business at Canadore College, performs as a musician and balances a large variety of other jobs.

"It takes a while as an apprentice. I remember when I was apprenticing. I made like 6000 in my first year."

"That's why you don't make any money at first. It's because you have to make sure that you are capable of doing something permanent on someone's skin," explains Ironside. "When you're working on somebody and you are giving them something that they're gonna have for the rest of their life, you have to make sure you are not messing up."

"You also have to establish yourself, you have to create a presence, people will have to get to know you.

"You are playing with someone's blood, and their lives, and their appearance. You need to make sure that you can walk before you can run," explains Ironside. "There's always going to be somebody who wants to give you money and there's gonna be somebody that wants to take it.

It is your responsibility to make sure that you are not doing them a disservice."

As a luxury service, people often do not think that cancelling their appointments last minute will have an impact on their business.

"If somebody cancels you at the very last minute, you have to scramble."

"As something that is an elective thing, people have a tendency to think of it as an elective income thing for us," explains Ironside. "It's not. This is how we feed our families and pay our bills."

While a majority of their customers request custom designs, nothing excites them more than choosing one of their flash designs.

"The excitement when someone requests a flash piece. You push the red button on a tattooer, " says Khokhar.

"It's a good thing," says Horswood.

"It gets us really excited and happy," says Khokhar.

"A flash piece is your own idea that you came up with," explains Khokhar. "It's not a client asking you to draw something for them based on what they want. It's something you conceptualised, you put the time in, and you

see GENTLEST page 11

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Call for volunteers

The Township of Algonquin Highlands is currently seeking volunteer coaches to assist with this summer's Stanhope Soccer League.

The Stanhope Soccer League is a fun, non-competitive, skills-building league for children aged 4 to 11. Games take place on Tuesday evenings (6:30 to 7:30 p.m.) throughout July and August at the soccer fields behind the Stanhope Firefighters' Community Hall at 1095 North Shore Road. This year's season will run from Jul. 2 to Aug. 20. Registration for players will open on Apr. 15.

If you'd like to take a kick at coaching this season, or to learn more about the program, please email recreation@algonquinhighlands.ca or call 705-766-9968. *Submitted*

Gentlest hands in the biz

from page 10

created it out of your own artistic abilities and your creative mind."

Modifications to flash pieces are welcome. In old school tattooing, you would choose your tattoo from racks and racks of flash, says Khokhar.

"People know me for the watercolour style that I do," says Khokhar. "That's kind of a unique style that isn't really done a lot. Generally, we want to be versatile in many different styles. There's a lot of people out there in the industry who specialise in one thing. We kind of steer away from that, we want something to walk through the door and say 'this is what I want'."

Although they love doing watercolour tattoos, Khokhar currently desires to do more portrait work.

"We're a safe space for everybody. Everybody's welcome. All bodies, everybody," says Ironside.

"I don't feel like we give off an intimidating vibe. I feel like we're very welcoming."

"I've been to many shops over the years and there are some that are very intimidating," explains customer Carrie Wooldridge.

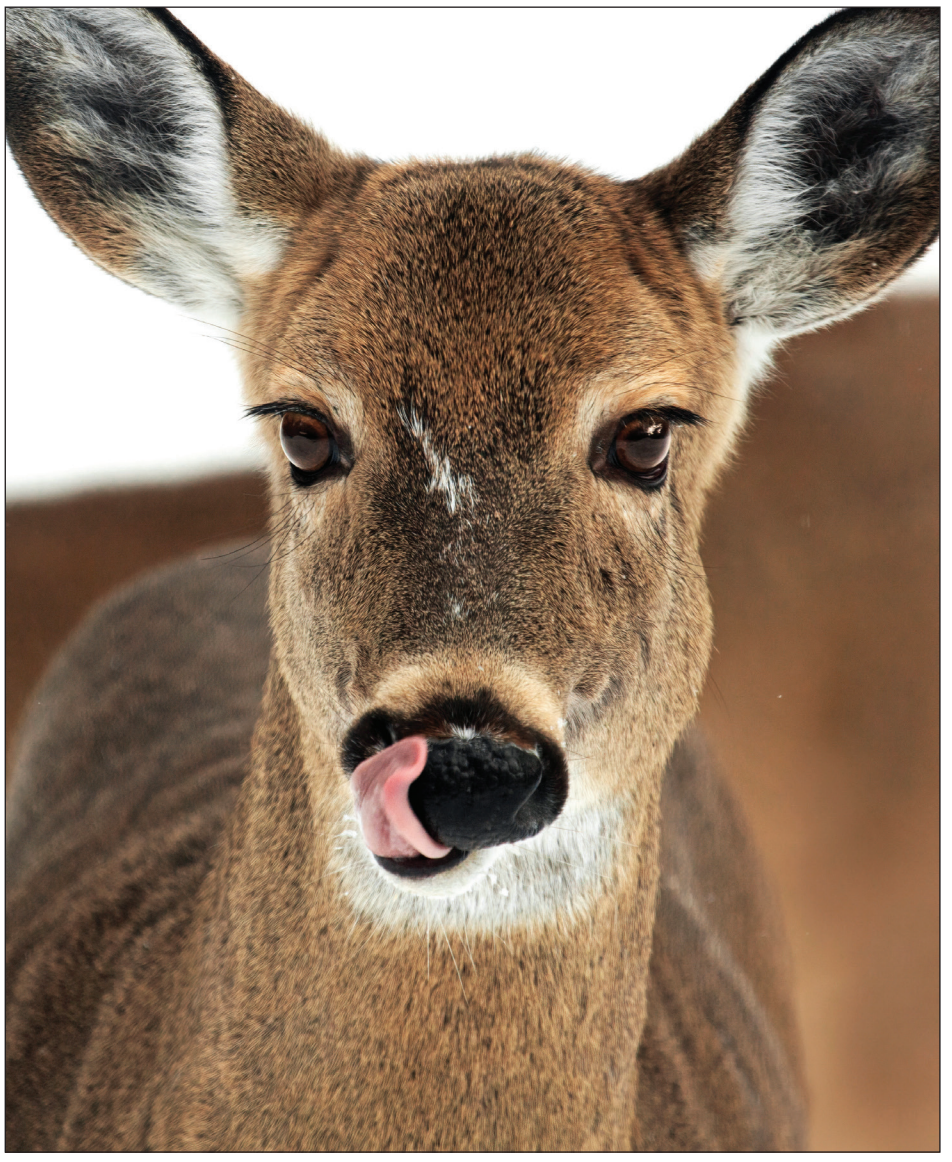
"Bronwin has super gentle, light hands. There are artists that are very, very heavy and it is a lot more painful."

"You always want to make sure you know what your pressure is when you're tattooing, what your needle depth is," explains Khokhar. "That's why when you're an apprentice you're encouraged to tattoo yourself so you can feel it."

"It's nice to hear when a client says you're the most gentle person that's ever tattooed me," says Khokhar

"You're already hurting someone," explains Ironside. "You don't need to go above and beyond. That's why we try to aim for our shop to be light and bright and welcoming. It's already an aggressive thing that you're going through. You don't need it to be a more intimidating thing than it already is."

"Anything that is racist, bigoted, homophobic or of that nature is not gonna fly and it's not gonna happen at our shop," says Ironside.



A morning lick

A deer licks it's nose on a warm winter's morning. /Photo submitted by Tammy Nash

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Seniors Chair Exercises
When: Thursdays, at 1 p.m.
Where: St. George's Anglican Church, 617 Mountain Street
Safe and gentle exercises for seniors to help with balance, strength and flexibility. Free to join.

Cribbage and Euchre
When: Tuesdays at 2 p.m.
Where: St. George's Anglican Church, 617 Mountain St.
Please join us Tuesdays for cribbage and Euchre at St. George's Anglican Church. With funding from the Government of Ontario. Please contact lynnhiggsthompson@haliburtonanglican.ca for more information.

Super Cash Calendar Draws
When: Second Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m. January until October.
Where: Haliburton Legion
Three tickets pulled per night. First ticket winner receives $100, second ticket $200, and third ticket $500. Winners will be posted every month on www.haliburtonlions.com. Public is welcome to attend the draws at the Lions meetings.

Weekly Meat Rolls
When: Every Saturday, 3 p.m.
Where: Coboconk Legion, Hwy 48 & 35
Join us for our weekly meat draw at the Coboconk Legion. 5 spins for $10. The first 4 rounds are for highest and lowest score with 2 winners per round. The last round is for a prepare-it-yourself dinner for two. Additional spins for this round are available for $2 each. Call 705-454-8127 or email info@coboconklegion.ca for more information.

Student Art Exhibition
When: now until Mar. 30
Where: Agnes Jamieson Gallery, 176 Bobcaygeon Rd. Minden
Archie Stouffer Elementary School and the Agnes Jamieson Gallery present to you a juried exhibition of artwork with the theme 'What does Minden mean to you?' Viewing is Tuesday to Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. Admission is by donation. Contact culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca or 705-286-3763 for full details and updates.

Easter Colouring Contest
When: Mar. 1 to 28 at 12 noon
Where: Curry Chevrolet, 5065 County Rd 21
Submit a colouring page in one of the following age categories: 0-4 years, 5-8 years, 9-14 years 15+ years. Prizes awarded for the top two entries in each category. Colouring sheets can be picked up, dropped off, or mailed to the dealership or can be scanned and emailed to reception@currychevrolet.ca. Call 705-457-2100 for more information.

Lenten Lunch
When: March 6 at 12 noon
Where: St. Paul's Anglican Church, 19 Invergordon Ave. Minden
Join us at St Paul's Anglican Church for a service at 12 noon followed by a soup lunch by donation.

Lenten Lunch
When: Mar. 13 at 12 noon
Where: Our Lady of Fatima Church, 7 Bobcaygeon Rd. Minden
Join us at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church for a service at 12 noon followed by a soup lunch by donation.

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20th Annual YWCA Empty Bowls Raises Just Under $20,000

Thanks to the support and generosity of our community, the 20th annual YWCA Empty Bowls event raised just under $20,000 in support of our Nourish Food Program.

With the funds raised this year, supporters of Empty Bowls have now helped raise over $210,000 for the YWCA over the event's 20-year history.

Close to 200 guests attended Empty Bowls on Friday, Feb. 23 at The Venue in downtown Peterborough and enjoyed a wide variety of delicious food options provided by 15 local restaurants. The handcrafted ceramic and wooden bowls created and donated by community artisans were a big hit with participants, many of whom purchased extra bowls to take home.

"This year, more than ever, I'm encouraged and humbled by the number of people who support Empty Bowls with their generosity. The time devoted to making this event a success holds true this year more than ever," says YWCA Executive Director Kim Dolan. "20 years is a remarkable milestone, especially given the challenges in recent years. It is a testament to the dedication of our community members who fired up their kilns, sharpened their chisels, showed up, donated, sponsored, volunteered, and continued the legacy of Empty Bowls in Peterborough."

All proceeds from Empty Bowls will support the Nourish Food Program operated by the YWCA, which provides fresh food at affordable costs to families experiencing hunger.

The Nourish program offers monthly food boxes, community gardening, and a weekly market at Curve Lake First Nation, bringing high quality produce from local farms to the community at affordable prices. Thanks to the support of the community, we distribute about 260 food boxes each month to individuals and families around the Peterborough area.

YWCA Peterborough Haliburton is grateful to our 2024 Empty Bowls sponsors, including our Presenting Sponsor, Cornerstone Family Dentistry; our Location Sponsor, The Venue; our Media Sponsor, KawarthaNOW; and our Bowl Partners, the Kawartha Potters Guild and Kawartha Woodturners Guild.

We also thank all the local restaurants who prepared and served a wonderful array of dishes representing Peterborough's food scene, including Ashburnham Ale House, the Black Horse Pub, By The Bridge, Fresh Dreams, Hanoi House, Hard Winter Bakery, La Hacienda, La Mesita, NAKA Japanese, Naked Chocolate, Revelstoke, Sam's Place, St Veronus, The Pin, and The Venue.

Submitted by YWCA Peterborough Haliburton

The Ford government is starving local public hospitals

A new report, Robbing from the public to build the private: The Ford government's hospital privatization scheme reveals that local hospitals in every region of Ontario have operating rooms sitting idle the majority of the time. The public has funded local hospitals for more than 70 years to build operating room capacity that is unused while the Ford government is shunting unprecedented public money to private for-profit clinics and hospitals to build new operating rooms, the Coalition reports.

For the last year, the Coalition researched the unused capacity in local public hospitals through Freedom of Information requests and interviews with surgical staff. They gathered figures from Ontario government budget and expense documents, media reports, contracts and accountability agreements to provide a litany of examples of much higher costs and large funding increases provided by the Ford government to for-profit corporation clinics, hospitals and staffing agencies. At the same time, the government has imposed dollar cuts, deficits, and wage caps on public hospitals, robbing them of the ability to attract and retain staff and use their existing operating room capacity. For example, the following communities have operating rooms that are functional but unused: Alexandria, Brockville, Cambridge, Hawkesbury, Kitchener, London, North Bay, Oakville, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharines, Southampton, and Wiarton. In addition, the majority of operating rooms in the following communities are closed the majority of the time (late afternoons, evenings, overnight and/or on weekends): Alliston, Almonte, Barrie, Bowmanville, Carleton Place, Collingwood, Cornwall, Kingston, Meaford, Nepean, Niagara Falls, Orillia, Oshawa, Ottawa, Pembroke, Peterborough, Toronto, and Welland.

> "Hundreds of millions of dollars in public money is being used to dismantle and privatize our public hospitals, robbing the public to build the private."
>
> — NATALIE MEHRA
> ED, ONTARIO HEALTH COALITION

In addition, the Coalition reports the Ford government has:

-Imposed real dollar cuts on public hospitals, pushing them into service closures and deficits, while funding for-profit hospitals and clinics with increases up to and over 300 per cent. Ontario funds its public hospitals at the lowest rate of all provinces.

-Funded private for-profit hospitals at double the rate per surgery than it funds public hospitals.

-Funded private for-profit ophthalmology clinics across Ontario at 21 per cent - 56 per cent more for each cataract surgery.

-Refused to take action on the for-profit staffing agencies that are charging up to three times more than public hospitals for staff, having escalated their prices by more than 70% since Ford took office, while imposing wage caps and real dollar cuts on staff in public hospitals.

-Chronically underspent the health care budget, shunting billions to contingency fund and budget surplus, while leaving hospitals in unprecedented crisis.

"Hundreds of millions of dollars in public money is being used to dismantle and privatize our public hospitals, robbing the public to build the private," said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "A few for-profit corporations are being enriched by the Ford government's privatization scheme while our public hospitals and patients pay the price. It is beyond time that there is a rigorous investigation into who is benefitting from these policy choices and what their connections are to this government, because the costs and threats to our local public hospitals and the future of our single-tier public health system are very real and urgent."

For more information: Natalie Mehra, executive director (416) 230-6402 (cell), natalie@ontariohc.ca and Salah Shadir, operations director (647) 648-5706 salah@ontariohc.ca. Local health coalitions across Ontario are also available.

Submitted by the Haliburton Highlands LTC Coalition/Aging Together as Community

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		1			8		2	
9								
	5				4	8		
8				9			5	
	6		2					7
				4	6		9	
7	3						4	5
1					2			6
2						7		1

Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

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Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 14

Sweets for snappers

The Minden Animal Hospital had a bake sale on Wed. Feb. 28th to support the Turtle Guardian's turtle tunnel and incubator projects. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

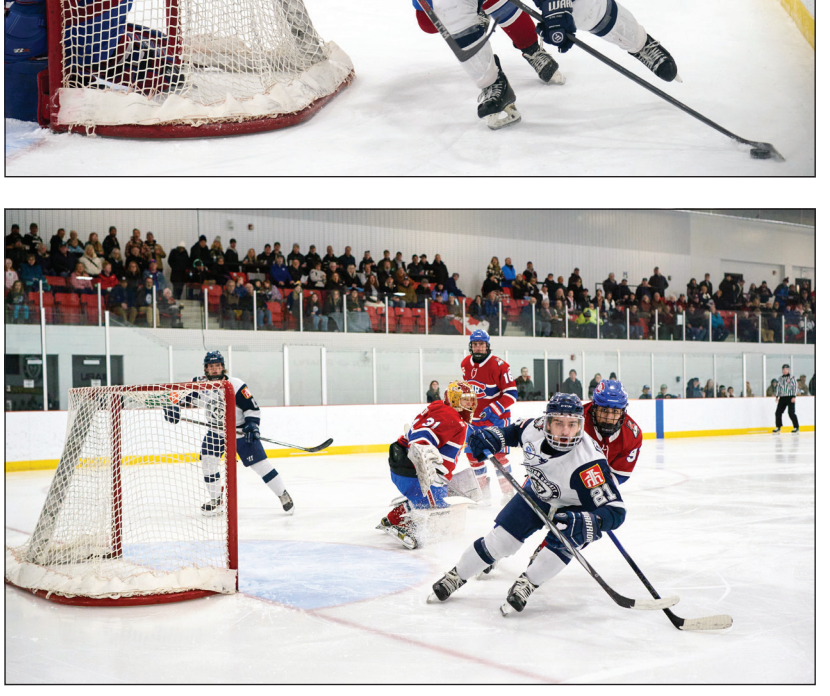
‘Right back where we started from’

The Huskies are currently fourth out of 12 in the Ontario Junior Hockey League Eastern Division, earning them a spot in playoffs. The boys in blue will be up against the Cobourg Cougars in fifth place in the division.

The team celebrated their final game of the regular season by welcoming their billet families to the ice for recognition before their game against the Toronto Junior Canadiens on Saturday, Mar. 2.

With a final score of 6-4 for the Huskies, the team left the home ice with a proud crowd. They also won their Sunday game in Niagara 2-1 against the Niagara Falls Canucks to end the regular season with a howl.

Photos are from Saturday’s home game at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena. /TIM YANO Special to the *Echo*

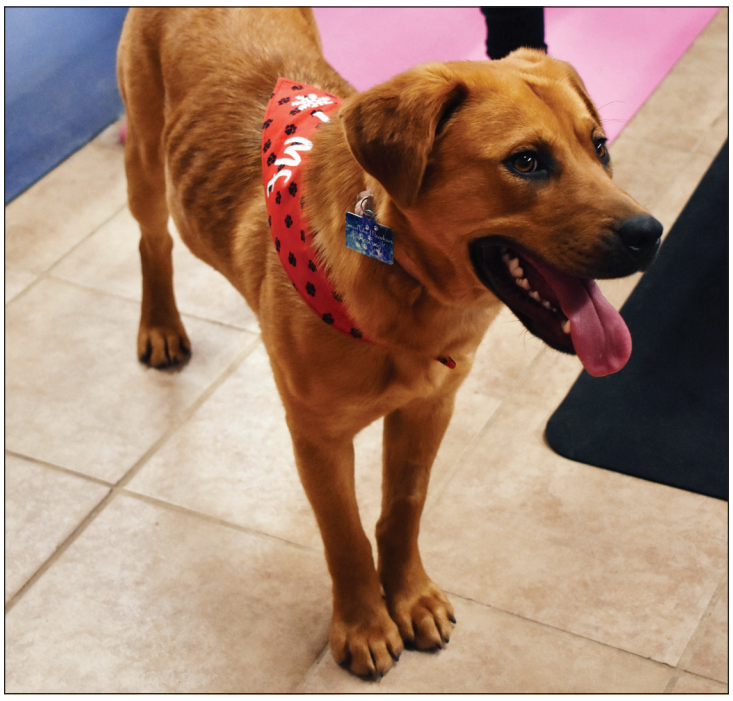


Stars on ice

Local figure skaters shone at Minden Skating Club's Jump, Spin and Glide into Spring Gala on Sunday, Mar. 3 at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena. The event was a showcase for all of the hard work the skaters put into this year's season. /TIM YANO Special to the *Echo*

SUDOKU SOLUTION

4	7	1	9	6	8	5	2	3
9	2	8	5	3	7	1	6	4
6	5	3	1	2	4	8	7	9
8	4	7	3	9	1	6	5	2
3	6	9	2	8	5	4	1	7
5	1	2	7	4	6	3	9	8
7	3	6	8	1	9	2	4	5
1	8	5	4	7	2	9	3	6
2	9	4	6	5	3	7	8	1



Downward Dog

The Fish Hatchery was packed with people and pups participating in Snowflake Meadows Rescue's Puppy Yoga on Saturday, Mar. 2. The partnership betweeen Harmony Yoga and Snowflake Meadows was a fundraiser for sheltering, feeding, adoption, veterinary care, and cleaning supply funds, and $1,615 was raised from the event. For adoption information, contact snowflakemeadowrescue@gmail.com or call 289-338-3429. /VIVIAN COLLINGS Staff

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A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED and will take place April 3, 4 & 5 7:30 p.m.at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion at the High School in Haliburton, and April 6 at 2 p.m. presented by Highlands Little Theatre. Tickets available at Up River Trading, Minden & Haliburton. Friends please accept this as the only intimation.

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Board backs doctors on LTC placements

An effort by Haliburton doctors to ensure that acute care beds are available for acute care patients has received the backing of the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Board. Executive Director Foster Loucks will be writing a letter of support for the position taken by the physicians from the Haliburton Family Medical Centre, to Cam Jackson, Minister responsible for Long Term Care.

The letter requested that, in the future, when transferring patients to long term care facilities, priority be given to those already in acute care beds in the area, over transfers from other regions. By placing priority on those patients ready for long term care (LTC) placement who are occupying acute care beds, the doctors suggest the acute facilities can be better utilized.

"With baby boomers retiring to this area and bringing their elderly parents with then, soon our beds will be full with patients from other areas," said Dr. Aoife Conway. The doctors were concerned with the situation, which occurred in early February, at the Haliburton Hospital. According to the letter, there five of the ten acute care beds at the hospital were being occupied by long-term care patients. When three spaces in the local long-term care facilities became available. One space was taken by a patient still at home in Haliburton County, but the remaining two were filled by transferred patents from nursing homes outside the region. As a result the LTC patients continued to occupy the Haliburton Hospital beds. With just ten beds avail-

(more on page 20)

Look for The Times next Tuesday

The next edition of *The Times* will appear Tuesday, April 6. This change in schedule is necessary to accommodate the Easter weekend schedule of our printer and to give *The Times* staff an opportunity to enjoy the holiday weekend. Deadlines for the next issue remain the same: Classified ads, Thursday at noon; Display advertising, Thursday at 4 p.m. We wish everyone an enjoyable Easter celebration.

SWEET ANTICIPATION: Twelve year old Randy Heath and his four year old brother Mackenzie, from Kinmount, enjoyed the sweet harvest of spring Saturday at the Wintergreen Sugar Bush near Gelert. Bush owners, Tom and Diane Dawson, report the warm weather over the weekend has increased the flow of sap, just in time for the annual MapleFest celebration this coming weekend. Sugar bushes throughout the Highlands will be open to visitors who want to see how they can extract sugar from trees. Most also offer a free taste of maple taffy on snow, just like these two lads are enjoying.

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1.8% Financing Up to 48 Months CARVANS & GRAND CARVANS
0% Financing Up to 48 Months NEONS
2.8% Financing Up to 48 Months on DODGE RAM TRUCKS

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